

Thank you, Veterans

Written by Mike Honda
Wednesday, 07 November 2007 19:00

On Veterans Day we are reminded of our debt to American military service members, both active duty and veterans. Just as they have made incredible sacrifices for our nation, our country must fulfill our responsibilities to them.

Our veterans deserve better than what [reports uncovered](#) they were receiving at Walter Reed and other veterans care facilities. This Congress is taking America in a New Direction, providing real support for our troops and veterans, and earlier this year passed the largest veterans funding increase in history.

Fulfilling our Promise to Veterans: Health Care

The Fiscal Year 2008 [Military Construction and Veterans Affairs](#) spending bill, which I was proud to support, provides the largest increase in VA health care in history. In FY2008, the VA will treat 5.8 million patients, including about 263,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. To reduce 400,000 claim backlogs, we are adding more than 1,100 new claims processors. I know that this will make a real, tangible difference in the lives of our district's veterans.

The bill is the largest single increase in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration (VA), at \$3.8 billion above President Bush's budget request level. The men and women who bravely served in our military deserve a benefits package will meet the needs of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, make up for the President's past shortchanging of veterans, and keep the President's fee increases from hitting veterans.

Fair Policies for Veterans

I would also like to let you know about a bill that I recently reintroduced to fix an injustice in our nation's [current law](#) . Imagine an uninsured veteran who has a medical emergency and is rushed to a nearby hospital that happens to be a non-VA hospital. The veteran receives care until he or she is in stable condition, at which point the hospital attempts to transfer the veteran to a VA-hospital. If the VA hospital has available beds, care will resume at the VA facility and the VA will reimburse the non-VA hospital for the emergency treatment. If, however, there are no beds available at the VA hospital, the veteran must be returned to the non-VA facility and *would be required to cover the costs for all care thereafter*

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One of my constituents told me about how this happened to him. For uninsured veterans who find themselves in this situation, their medical emergency can turn into a financial disaster. This scenario is increasingly likely as the VA eliminates hospital beds.

My bill clarifies the language in the current law so that the nightmare scenario above never becomes reality for any of our veterans. It clearly states that the VA must cover an uninsured veteran's emergency health care costs – before and after stabilization – if no VA hospital bed is available at a geographically accessible VA facility. This important clarification will save many veterans a great deal of grief, and has been endorsed by [AMVETS](#) and the [American Legion](#) .

Thank you, Veterans

There are over 80,000 veterans in California's 15th District, and I am proud to advocate for them. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, please know that I will work to see that healthcare and benefits for our veterans are adequately addressed, and adequately funded.

If you are a veteran or would like access to helpful information for veterans services, along with my efforts in Congress to fight for our veterans, please visit the [veterans section](#) of my website.